

Non-Market Impacts of Agriculture on Communities

Presentation to Agricultural and Farmland Protection
Inservice for Cornell Cooperative Extension
Educators, October 14, 2004

by

Gil Gillespie (Dev Soc)
Duncan Hilchey (Dev Soc)
David Kay (AEM)
David Smith (An Sci)

Supported by CUAES, project # NYC-159-459

Project Background

- At the initiation of the study the non-market consequences of agriculture on communities in the U.S. had gotten little attention
- Key project goals:
 - ▶ Review the literature
 - ▶ Conduct focus groups
 - ▶ Develop measures of the non-market effects
 - ▶ Devise means by which local citizens & officials could make these effects “visible”

Focus Groups - 1

- Conducted in 3 counties
 - ▶ A “stable rural” county (Otsego)
 - ▶ A “suburbanizing” county (Washington)
 - ▶ An “urban” county (Monroe)
- 3 focus groups in each county
 - ▶ Ag & ag-related
 - ▶ General public
 - ▶ Mixed

Focus Groups - 2

- Question 1: "From your own perspective, is having agriculture in your community important to you? For what reasons?"
- Post-it notes
- Newsprint: "Economic," "Environment," "Social/Cultural," "Other"
- Question 2: "Thinking more broadly than your own perspective, who in this community thinks that agriculture is important? Who thinks it is not important? For what reasons?"

Post-it Notes: Economy (72)

- Jobs/employment (29)
- Supports economy (includes local) (26)
- Tourism (9)
- Public services/taxes (6)
- Economy adverse impact (1)
- Supports farm businesses (1)

Post-it Notes: Environment (98)

- Aesthetics (26)
- Environmental ethic (17)
- Open space (NIMBY) (17)
- Open space values (13)
- Clean industry (9)
- Holistic ethic/sustainability (5)
- Environmental adverse impacts (3)
- Ag as appropriate resource use (3)
- Wildlife habitat maintenance (3)
- Wildlife inherent benefit (1)
- Wildlife resource (1)

Post-it Notes: Social/Cultural (92)

- Public awareness of agriculture (24)
- Quality of life (including spiritual renewal) (20)
- Heritage/tradition (24)
- Community ethic (14)
- Work ethic (6)
- Feed-the-world ethic (1)
- Recreation (1)
- Small farm or firm values (1)
- Youth (1)

Post-it Notes: Food (51)

- Local food supply (24)
- Food quality (17)
- Local food security (9)
- Food safety (1)

Post-it Notes: Other (25)

- Other (25)

General Thoughts on Findings - 1

- Agriculture was deemed important by all groups
 - ▶ The economic impacts of agriculture tend to come to people's minds first
 - ▶ Non-market effects are also important, even to people without direct agricultural experience

General Thoughts on Findings - 2

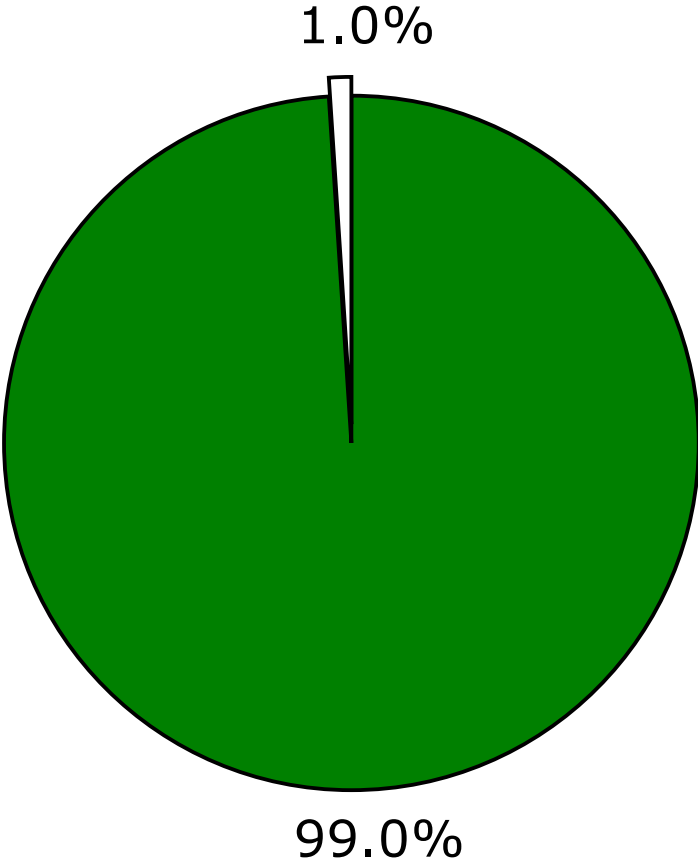
- We did not find many marked differences either among the counties or the types of focus groups
 - ▶ General public tended to be quite supportive of smaller-scale agriculture (as opposed to “corporate/industrial agriculture”)
 - ▶ Environment as an issue seemed more prominent in the urban county

Do these focus group results apply to the general public?

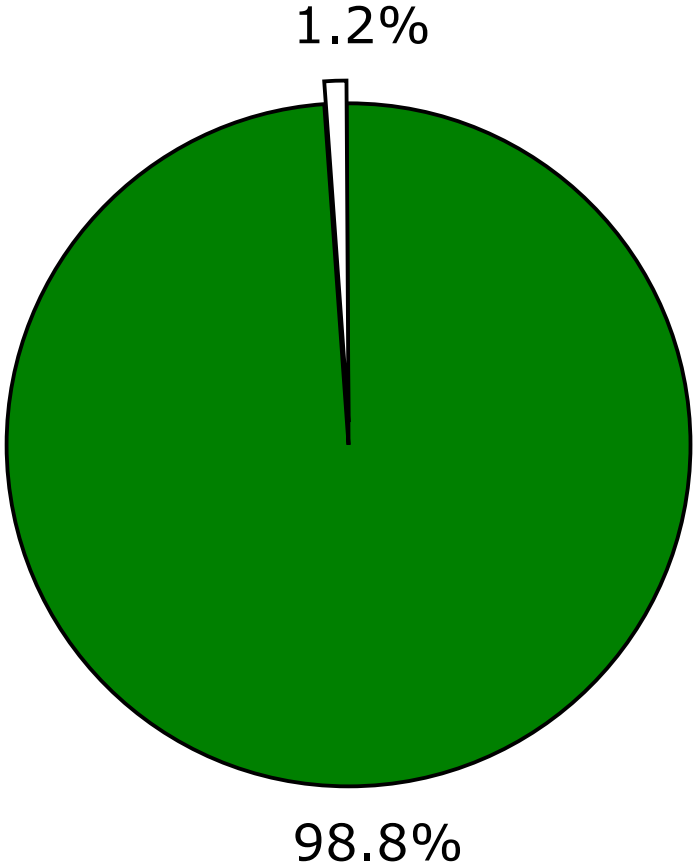
- We feared that the overall favorable attitude toward agriculture by representatives of the general public might reflect a bias in selection
- Submitted 3 questions to the 2004 Empire State Poll conducted in February-April
 - ▶ Upstate sample, N=400
 - ▶ Upstate rural county oversample, N=200

Do you feel having agriculture in New York State is important today?

Rural Upstate

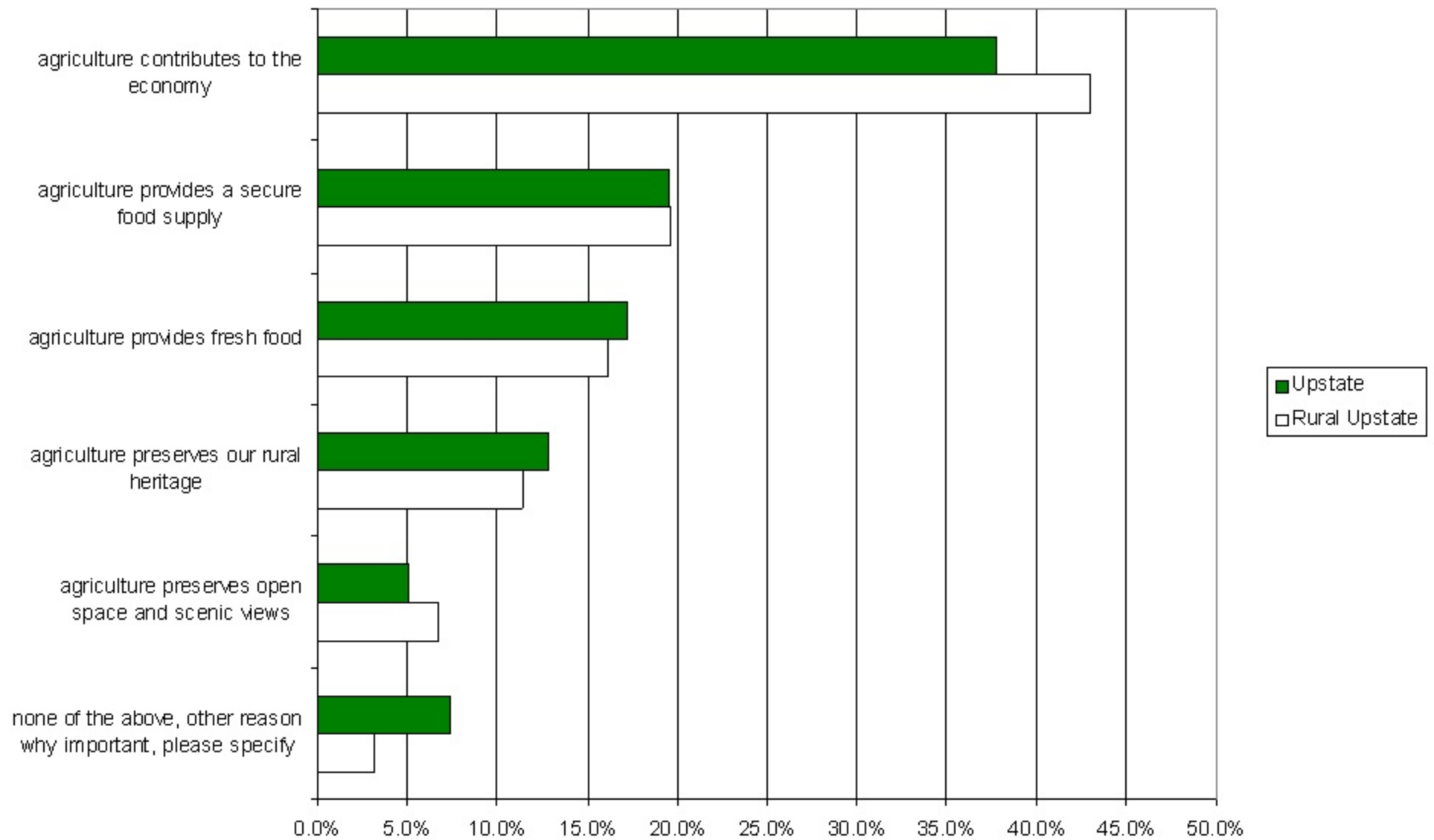


Upstate

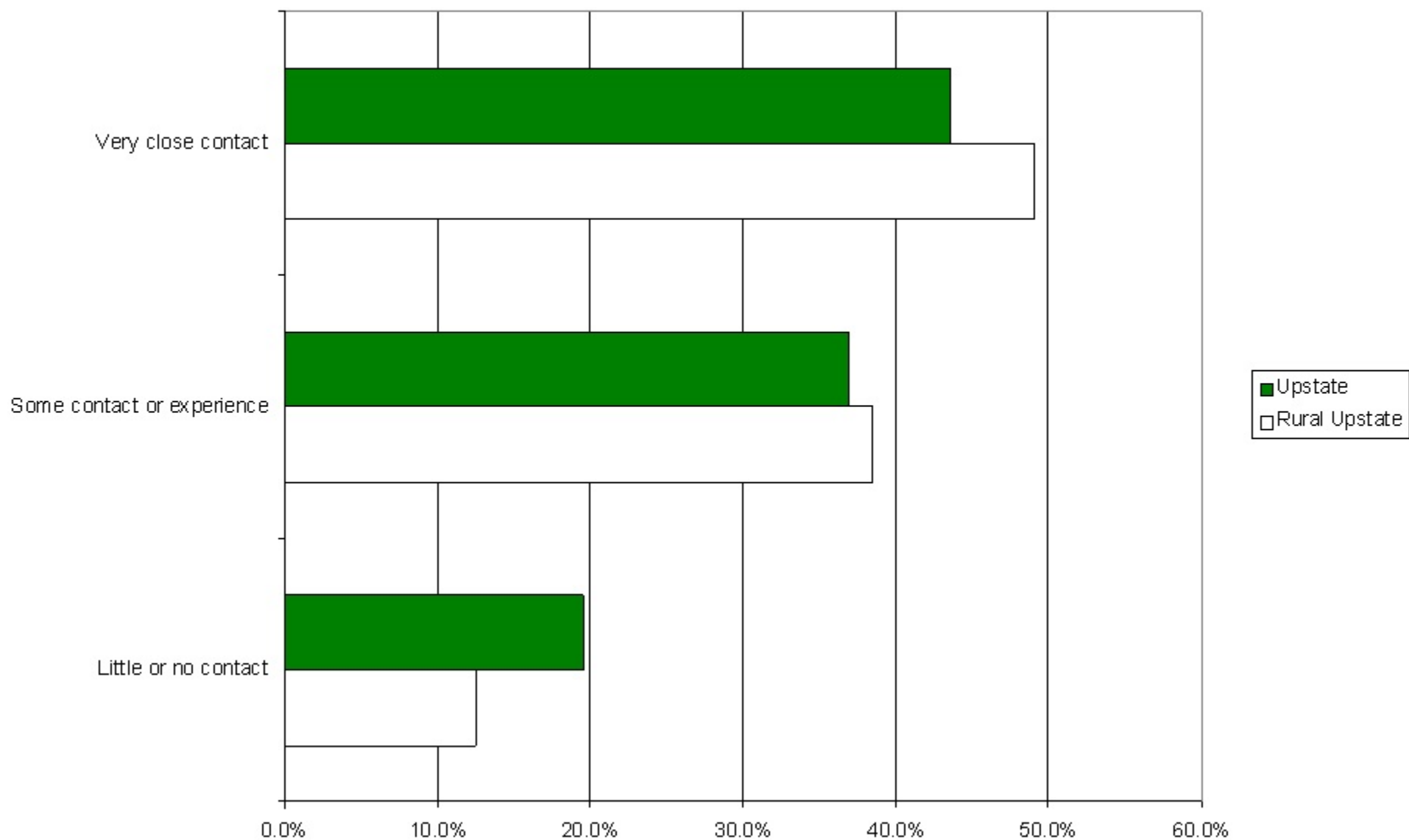


■ Yes
□ No

The most important reason why having agriculture in the state might be important to you



Which best describes the level of contact you have had with farmers in your life?



Conclusions

- Generally favorable attitudes toward local agriculture is a resource for preserving it
- Identifying and bringing non-market considerations into discussions of issues may be important for preserving local agriculture

What Else Coming from Project?

- Non-market impacts bibliography
- Summary report
- Agriculture viability index